CHAPTER 6

Air Traffic Control

6.1 APPLICABILITY

This chapter supplements the sources listed in paragraph 1.2 and provides additional rules and procedures of particular importance for the operation and control of naval aircraft.

6.2 AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL PROCEDURES

6.2.1 Authorized Personnel. Only personnel properly qualified in accordance with the NATOPS Air Traffic Control Manual shall exercise control over aircraft exclusive of actual/simulated shipboard or tactical operations under the control of non-ATC certified personnel.

6.2.2 Control Tower. At airfields with an operating control tower, the control tower shall exercise control of all aircraft operating to, from, or on the airfield and within class B, C, or D surface area. Prior approval from the tower shall be obtained for all taxi, takeoff, landing, towing, and related operations. Preventive control may be provided to eliminate repetitious, routine approval of pilot action; in that case, the controller will issue instructions or advice only if a situation develops that needs corrective action. Prior to preventive control service being provided, appropriate directives shall be issued to ensure that affected ATC personnel and aircraft operators being afforded preventive control are aware of the procedures being used.

6.2.3 Control of Formation Flights

a. Formation flights shall be controlled/ cleared as a single aircraft unless the formation leader requests otherwise.

b. Responsibility for landing interval between elements of a formation flight rests with the pilots in the formation.

6.2.4 Taxi Instructions

a. Taxi Clearance. Taxi clearance shall be obtained prior to taxiing. Formation leaders may obtain taxi clearance for their entire flight. A clearance to taxi to the runway authorizes the aircraft to cross all runways/taxiways that the taxi route intersects except the assigned takeoff runway. This does not authorize the aircraft to enter or cross the assigned takeoff runway at any point. Ground control shall clear aircraft from the parking area to the warm-up areas. Pilots shall read back all hold/hold short instructions received during taxi. Aircraft shall remain on ground control while in the warm-up area until cleared to change frequency or until ready for takeoff clearance.

b. Overtaking. No taxiing aircraft shall overtake or pass another aircraft except with tower approval.

c. Taxi Speed. All aircraft shall be taxied at a safe rate of speed and under positive control of the pilot at all times.

d. Emergencies. When the tower is controlling an aircraft in an emergency, aircraft on the ground shall taxi clear of the runway. Those on the taxiway shall hold until authorized to proceed. All aircraft shall exercise radio discipline for the duration of the emergency. Pilots of taxiing aircraft sighting emergency vehicles displaying the flashing red light on the field shall stop and hold their positions until authorized to proceed by radio or light signals from the tower.

6.2.5 Departure Instructions

a. ATC Clearance. Aircraft departing on IFR flight plans will receive their ATC clearance on ground control or designated clearance delivery frequency. Departing pilots shall read back clearances differing from the filed flight plan.

b. Takeoff Clearance. Aircraft shall hold well clear of the duty runway until cleared by the tower for

takeoff or position and hold, and the aircrew has ensured that there is no conflicting traffic for runway use. Pilots shall read back position and hold and hold short instructions. When cleared for takeoff, aircraft shall take off without undue delay or clear the duty runway.

c. Unrestricted Climb. An unrestricted climb may be authorized for such reasons as noise abatement, fuel conservation, reduction of icing, or elimination of traffic conflicts. An unrestricted climb is authorized to climb directly to a cruise/en route altitude without an interim stop. It does not relieve the pilot of the responsibility to comply with applicable FARs, aircraft NATOPS and wing/squadron doctrine. Clearance for an unrestricted climb is not authorization for an aerobatic flight maneuver.

d. Frequency Changes. Single-piloted aircraft shall not be required to change radio frequency and/or transponder code settings until reaching an altitude of 2,500 feet above surface except when the aircraft is to level off and operate at an altitude below 2,500 feet. In that event, changes will be made after level off.

e. Intersection Departure. Pilots may be cleared either at controller discretion or at pilot request for an intersection departure to expedite air traffic and reduce delays unless local directives (i.e., Air Operations Manual) prohibit use of the applicable intersection. When clearing an aircraft for an intersection departure, controllers shall issue the measured distance from the intersection to the runway end. Issuance of the measured usable runway remaining may be omitted if appropriate directives (i.e., Air Operations Manual, letter of agreement, etc.) are issued to ensure that pilots and controllers are thoroughly familiar with these procedures, including usable runway length from the applicable intersection. Pilots still retain the prerogative to use the full runway length, provided they inform the tower of their intentions. It is the pilot's responsibility to determine that sufficient runway length is available to permit a safe takeoff under existing conditions.

6.2.6 Minimum Fuel. Minimum fuel is an advisory term indicating that in the judgment of the pilot the fuel state is such that no undue delay can be accepted en route to the destination. It is not an emergency situation, but undue delay may result in an emergency. If at any time the remaining usable fuel supply suggests the need for traffic priority to ensure a safe landing, the pilot shall declare an emergency and report fuel remaining in minutes. Both minimum fuel advisories and emergency fuel state shall be reported each time control is transferred to a new controller.

Note

Pilots declaring minimum fuel should not expect special handling from FAA controllers.

6.2.7 Handling of VIP Aircraft

a. Priority. Although priority is not normally given to VIP aircraft, controllers may give consideration to such aircraft provided safety of other aircraft is not affected. Controllers shall not request priority from FAA for VIP flights.

b. Estimated Time of Arrival. Persons charged with meeting and making arrangements for VIP flights may be embarrassed if such a flight arrives prior to the ETA. Every effort should be made to provide updated ETAs to interested parties. Except in unusual circumstances, pilots of VIP flights should not arrive prior to the ETA.

6.2.8 Approach Instructions. Single-piloted aircraft arriving on an IFR flight plan shall be provided single frequency approach (SFA) to the maximum extent that communications capabilities and traffic will permit. Those activities without SFA capabilities shall keep frequency and/or transponder code shifts to an absolute minimum below 2,500 feet above the surface.

6.3 LANDING INSTRUCTIONS

a. VFR Arrivals. Contact the appropriate controlling agency (e.g., approach control, tower, etc.) prior to entering Class B, C, or D airspace. Notify the controlling agency as soon as possible after initial contact of special handling requirements (e.g., hung ordnance, etc.).

b. Waveoff. A waveoff is mandatory when ordered by the control tower, runway duty officer, or wheels watch unless the pilot is experiencing an emergency. The waveoff may be given by radio, light signals, red flares, or hand/flag signals.

c. Wheels Down Report. A wheels down report shall be given as the aircraft turns onto the base leg

or after lowering the landing gear on straight-in approach. The controller shall remind the pilot to check wheels down at an appropriate position in the pattern unless the pilot has previously reported wheels down.

d. Lost Communication. If unable to establish radio communication, comply with the procedures contained in the Flight Information Handbook. Flashing of the landing/taxi lights is recommended in addition to the wing rock procedure.

6.3.1 Reduced Same Runway Separation. Strict adherence to the separation criteria for arriving and departing aircraft set forth in FAA Handbook 7110.65 may, in some circumstances, cause operational/training delays and airport congestion. Factors such as mission of the facility, airfield design, and aircraft models being supported may indicate that reduced separation standards are feasible and can be applied while maintaining adequate margins of safety. Subject to prior approval by the immediate senior in the chain of command, naval aviation shore facility commanders are authorized to establish and apply reduced separation criteria for Navy and Marine Corps aircraft at the airfields under their command with the following stipulations:

a. Such action is necessary to meet operational/training requirements.

b. In the case of formation instrument approaches, ceiling and visibility minimums stated in paragraph 5.1.12.6 apply.

c. Reduced separation criteria are applied only between aircraft of similar performance characteristics or when the preceding aircraft has higher performance than the following.

d. Prior to application of reduced separation criteria, appropriate directives are issued delineating the specific standards to be applied (i.e., distance between aircraft using alternate sides of the runway, distance between aircraft using centerline, aircraft model/classes to which reduced standards apply, etc.).

e. Appropriate measures have been instituted to ensure that affected ATC personnel and aircraft operators are aware of the criteria being applied.

6.3.1.1 Aircraft of Other Military Services. The conditions of paragraph 6.3.1 may also apply to aircraft of other military services when such conditions are agreed to in writing by the cognizant operational commander of the other service and the Navy or Marine Corps shore facility commander.

6.3.2 Procedure for Checking Wheels Down and Locked. When a pilot has any doubt as to the gear being down and locked, the pilot shall promptly notify the controlling agency. Further, the pilot should request an airborne visual check, preferably by a similar model aircraft if one is available and such a procedure is considered practicable and safe. If not possible, the pilot should request a ground visual check by the most qualified personnel available (e.g., LOS, RDD, etc.). If doubt exists as to gear being down and locked, the pilot shall notify the control tower, which will in turn direct the pilot to perform a low pass in front of the tower for the purpose of a visual check. Pilots should be aware, however, that air traffic control personnel may only comment on the appearance of the landing gear (e.g., wheels appear down). Should doubt exist after a visual check, crash and rescue equipment shall be available for precautionary landing. After a landing rollout, the aircraft shall not turn off the runway until ground personnel have made a visual check of the gear and gear pins have been installed. If a known not locked or up condition exists, normal crash alert procedures shall be instituted.

6.3.3 Runway Braking Action Advisory/ Condition Readings. ATC facilities shall issue runway braking action advisories when braking action reports received from pilots or authorized airport operations personnel indicate braking action is poor or nil. The Flight Information Handbook contains the necessary information for converting the numerical runway condition readings (included in the remarks portion of the weather sequence) to descriptive terms used in braking action advisories.

6.4 LETTERS OF AGREEMENT

The NATOPS Air Traffic Control Manual contains procedures for executing letters of agreement between FAA/USN air traffic control facilities concerning the control of air traffic. This guidance may also be used by wings/squadrons in effecting local letters of agreement with FAA facilities. The Navy Representative to the FAA Regional Headquarters (NAVREP) should be

consulted in these cases. Information copies of local letters of agreement not specifically addressed in the NATOPS Air Traffic Control Manual shall be forwarded to CNO (N785F) and the appropriate type commander.

6.5 VITAL MILITARY OPERATIONS

6.5.1 Priority. OPNAVINST 3722.30 (Security Control of Air Traffic and Air Navigation Aids (SCATANA)) states there are certain military operations vital to national defense. These operations include active air defense interceptor missions, active undersea warfare missions, and active airborne early warning and control missions. These operations are to be given priority over all other military and civil aircraft by procedural handling by ATC for the particular operation as specified in coordinated agreements or authorizations. Joint Letters of Agreement (LOAs) between naval commands and FAA become the coordinating agreements specified in SCATANA.

6.5.2 Letters of Agreement. Each naval aviation shore activity from which active alert missions are conducted shall develop and implement a joint LOA with the appropriate FAA or host nation agency to prevent air traffic control delays for active missions. Wing/squadrons that routinely stand alert status at non-U.S. Navy airfields should execute an appropriate LOA at those airfields. Items that must be addressed in LOAs include but are not limited to:

a. Procedures to notify ATC at least 5 minutes prior to the flight to allow for clearing of traffic from the departure corridor.

b. Provision for ATC release of the active mission aircraft to an appropriate tactical control agency upon request with due regard for safety of flight.

c. Provision of Military Assumes Responsibility for Separation of Aircraft (MARSA) within the same mission. Refer to OPNAVINST 3722.33 (FAA Handbook of Special Military Operations 7610.4).

Prior to signing and implementing any agreement, the proposed LOA shall be forwarded to the cognizant force commander for review and approval. NAVREPs should be consulted for assistance and advice in developing or revising joint LOAs and shall be provided copies of such agreements.